



CHANGING FAMILIES, CHANGING WORK

A Paper for the

Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of President Kennedy's
Commission on the Status of Women Report *American Women*

Prepared by

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INTRODUCTION

In September 1963, *Leave It To Beaver* aired for the last time.¹ Yet, the archetype of family life that this show idealized—the employed father and stay-at-home mother within the nuclear family—was so engrained in the collective unconscious that *American Women: The Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women* (hereafter *American Women*), delivered to President Kennedy in 1963, made almost no mention of it. It was just assumed that this was *normal*. Fifty years later perhaps the most profound change in American society is the change in family structures. In 1963, roughly two thirds of U.S. households were like the Cleavers in *Leave It to Beaver*.² Today, married couples with children represent only about 20% of U.S. households. The other 80% of households reflect a myriad of families—from single parents to same sex couples to dual-income couples, some of whom are married and some of whom are not.³ This paper focuses on the changes on the home front and how they have interacted with changes on the work front to create a new set of challenges and opportunities for ensuring that women and men can reach their full potential.

American Women's analysis of the home front, contained in the section “Home and Community,” begins with a brief history of the migration of families from the farm to cities and then suburbs and concludes that the most important issue facing American women was the erosion of a natural support system for child care. As a result, the section makes recommendations regarding how to replace this support through such programs as community-based services for housework as well as maternal and child health services. There is no discussion of men's role at home, nor of how the movement of women into the workforce, which the report contemplates, would affect women's role at home. In effect, *American Women* treats the home front as static, even as it calls for everything around it to change.

Today, we know that the home front is anything but static. It is in a constant state of adaptation to external and internal forces. While documenting all these forces is beyond the scope of this paper, several trends are important to understanding how the changing nature of family life is changing the workplace and vice versa. Perhaps one of the most powerful forces is technology, which has made it possible to work anywhere and anytime. This has both liberated people from their workplaces and tethered them to their mobile device of choice. Individuals and organizations are struggling to create the *new normal* around setting boundaries between work and life. Technology has also created a knowledge economy that favors those with a college education or higher, who are disproportionately women. Not only are women a higher

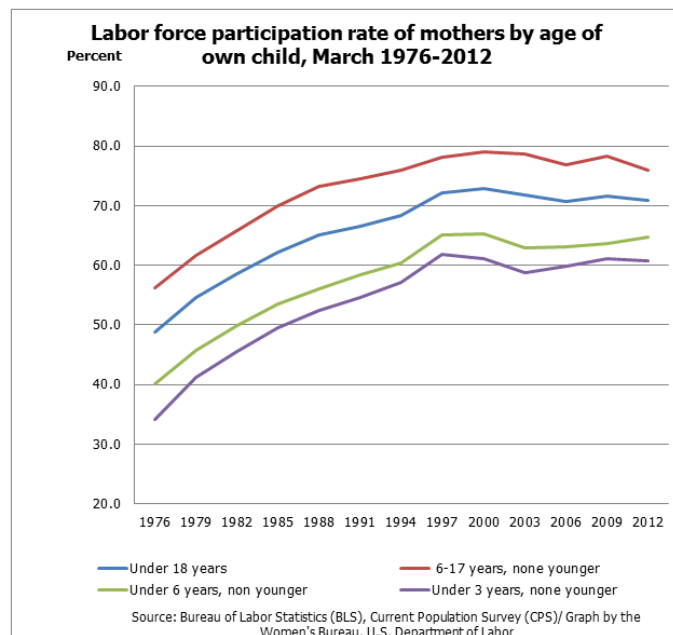
percentage of the educated workforce than ever before, but wage stagnation and rising costs also mean that women's employment is essential to their own and their family's economic security. In fact, most families with children have all adults working outside the home. The concept of work-family conflict—popularized by Harvard Business School's Rosabeth Moss Kanter in 1977⁴ and discussed exclusively with regard to employed mothers—today applies as much to employed fathers as mothers. In other words, a report on American women cannot be complete without discussing the state of American men. Ultimately, all these changes point to one conclusion: we need a new archetype of the 21st century provider that is not anchored in gender and a new archetype of the ideal employee that reflects the multiple roles that employees play in all spheres of their lives.

THE DUAL-CENTRIC PROVIDER: CHANGING ROLES AT HOME

Women's Changing Role

The story of the changing nature of the home front begins with the rise in the labor force participation rate of mothers, which increased steadily as women started moving into the workplace in the 1970s, although mothers' labor force participation rates have leveled off since 2000. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: The labor force participation rate of mothers (1976-2012)



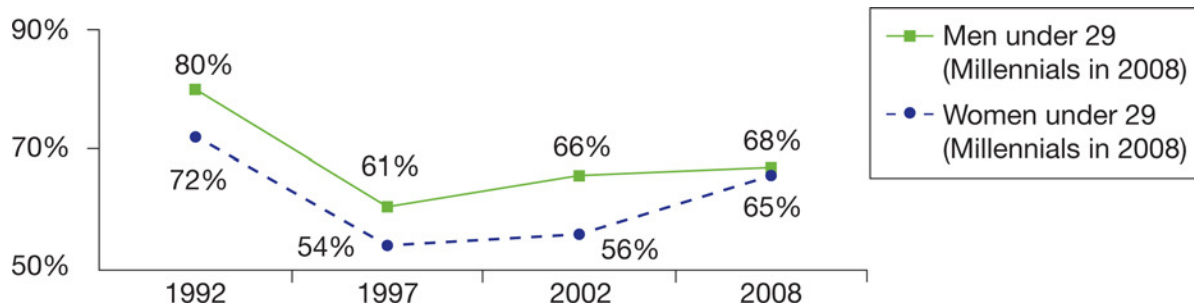
Not only are most mothers employed, but they are also an increasing source of financial support to their families. According to Families and Work Institute's (FWI) nationally representative 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce, employed women in dual-earner couples contributed an average of 45% of family income, up from 39% in 1997.⁵ Slightly over a quarter of these women (27%) had annual earnings at least 10 percentage points higher than their spouses/partners compared with 15% in 1997. Looking at it from another angle, more and more households are financially supported by the women in them. Today, 50 years after *American Women* was released and *Leave It to Beaver* ended, "a record 40% of all households with children under the age of 18 include mothers who are either the sole or primary source of income for the family," according to a Pew Research Center study.⁶ Of these breadwinner mothers, 68% (over two out of three) are single mothers. Clearly, the role of women in the family has changed.

While the implications of various factors, such as child care availability, on a single mother's workforce participation, are outside the scope of this paper, we do want to highlight that single mothers as a category is itself comprised of sub-groups. According to the Pew study, "compared with single mothers who are divorced, widowed or separated, never married mothers are significantly younger, disproportionately non-white, and have lower education and income. Close to half of never married mothers in 2011 (46%) are ages 30 and younger, six-in-ten are either black (40%) or Hispanic (24%), and nearly half (49%) have a high school education or less. Their median family income was \$17,400 in 2011, the lowest among all families with children."⁷ These mothers are the most likely to both need to work and to need high quality child care and are also the least likely to have access to either.

Despite these changes, old assumptions die hard. Many believe that mothers would not work if they didn't "have to" provide financially for their families. Americans in general do not see providing for their families financially as an important part of being a mother. In fact, according to the Pew study, only 25% of Americans say it is extremely important for mothers to provide income for their children, although there is a significant difference between Whites and Blacks on this topic, with 49% of Blacks saying it is extremely important, while only 21% of Whites say so.⁸

Our data indicate that, on the contrary, the distinction between "having to work" and "wanting to work" has eroded, at least in the minds of young women. To begin with, the gap between men's and women's desire for jobs with greater responsibility closed in 2008.⁹

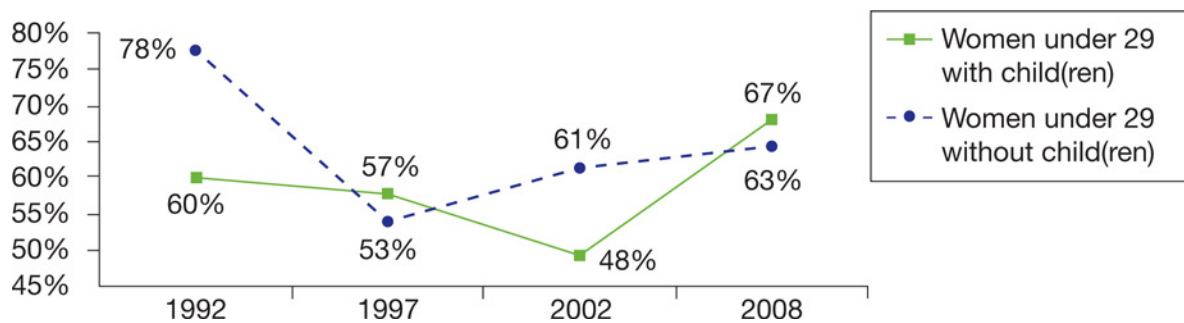
Figure 2: Young men's and young women's desire to have jobs with greater responsibility (1992-2008)



SOURCE: Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home (Families and Work Institute 2011)

This is true whether or not these women have children.

Figure 3: Desire to have jobs with greater responsibility among young women, with and without children (1992-2008)



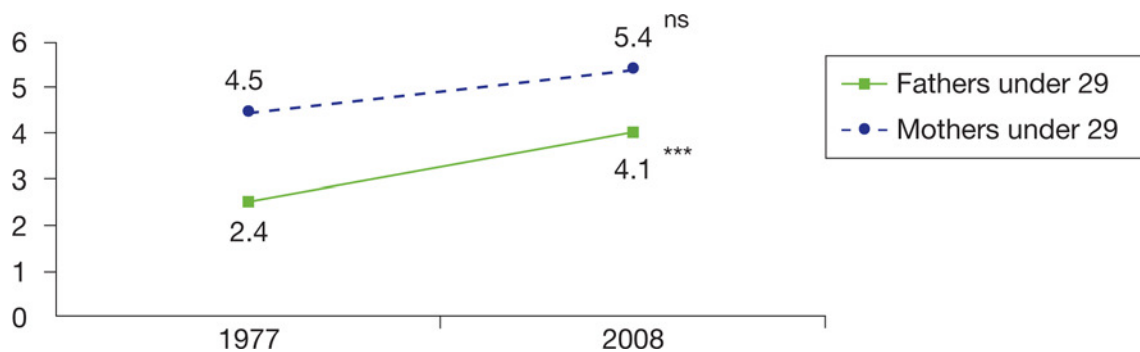
SOURCE: Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home (Families and Work Institute 2011)

Yet, for these mothers, the commitment to being significantly involved in their children's lives has not faded. If anything, it is stronger than ever. Mothers are spending five hours per day on average with their children, up by half an hour from 1977.¹⁰ Unlike in 1963, when *American Women* was released, we can now safely say that today most women expect to provide or are providing both emotionally and financially for their families—whether they are in traditional married couples with children or they are single and living alone or anything else in between. We call this mindset—where both work and family are prioritized in roughly equivalent ways—the dual-centric provider.

Men's Changing Role

The sea change in the role of women on the home front is only half the picture. The other half has to do with the role of men, in general, and fathers, in particular. In dual-income households with children under the age of 18, fathers have increased the average amount of time they are spending on caring for and doing things with their children from two hours per day in 1977 to 3.1 hours per day in 2008. This increase is particularly striking among young fathers, who have increased the time they spend with their children since 1977 by 71% (1.7 hours).¹¹

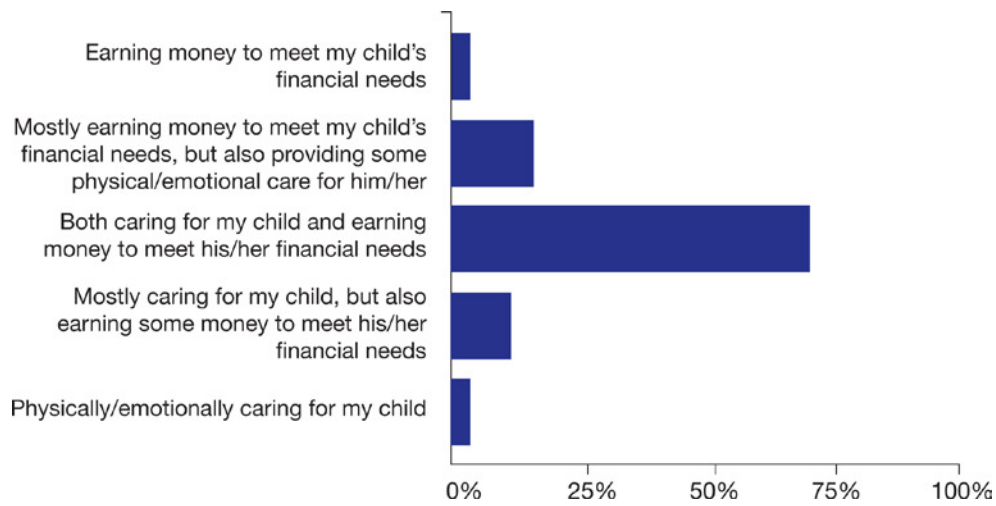
Figure 4: Young mothers' and fathers' time with children (1977-2008)



SOURCE: Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home (Families and Work Institute 2011)

A study of 2,000 fathers in professional and managerial positions shows that almost three out of four define being a father as providing both financially and emotionally for their families.¹²

Figure 5: How fathers see their responsibility to their children (2011)

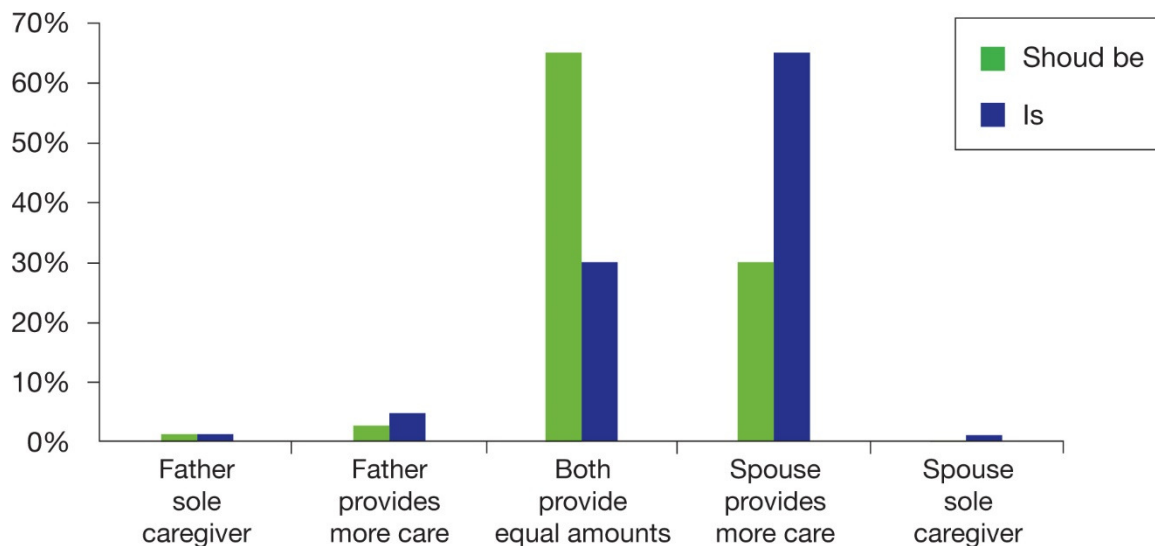


SOURCE: The New Dad: A Work (and Life) in Progress (Boston College 2013)

Men are also taking more responsibility for running the household—from cooking to cleaning—although women were still doing the majority of that work in most households in 2008.¹³

While an increasing number of fathers hold as their ideal providing both financially and emotionally, they are struggling to make this ideal a reality. In this same study of professional and managerial fathers, fathers admit that, while they would like to provide an equal amount of child care, the fact is that their spouses (i.e., the mothers) actually perform most of this care.

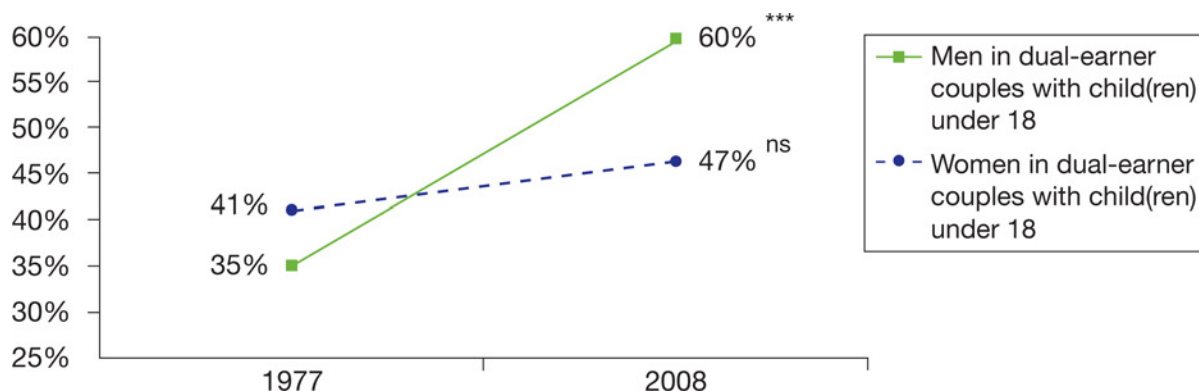
Figure 6: How caregiving should be divided and is divided (2011)



SOURCE: The New Dad: A Work (and Life) in Progress (Boston College 2013)

Is it any wonder then that fathers are reporting work-life conflict in greater numbers than mothers?¹⁴

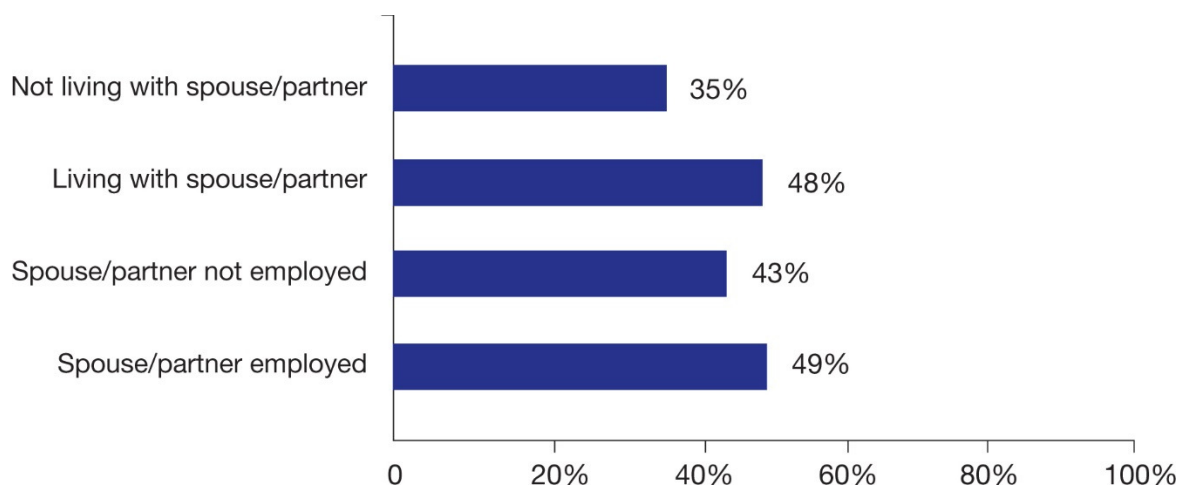
Figure 7: Percentage of fathers and mothers in dual-earner couples reporting work-family conflict (1977-2008)



SOURCE: Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home (Families and Work Institute 2011)

In the Families and Work Institute report, *The New Male Mystique*,¹⁵ we suggest that the increase in work-family conflict experienced by men is a symptom of the new male mystique—today’s male version of the “feminine mystique” coined by author Betty Friedan in 1963.¹⁶ Friedan used the term to describe how assumptions about women finding fulfillment in traditional domestic roles created tension and conflict for a number of women, preventing them from finding their identities and opportunities for meaningful work. Applying Friedan’s reasoning to men, the “traditional male mystique” would reflect the notion that men should seek fulfillment at work and strive to be successful as financial providers for their families. We use the term “new male mystique” to describe how traditional views about men’s role as breadwinners, in combination with emerging gender role values that inspire men to participate in family life, *and* a workplace that does not fully support these new roles have created pressure for men to, essentially, “do it all in order to have it all.” We have also found that men feel this pressure whether or not their spouse or partner is employed outside the home. This finding suggests that many men in dual-earner couples who support a decision to have their wives stay home to care for the children in the hope of alleviating work-life conflict may not be getting the payoff they were hoping for.¹⁷

Figure 8: Percentage of men reporting some/a lot of work-family conflict by relationship status



SOURCE: The New Male Mystique (Families and Work Institute 2011)

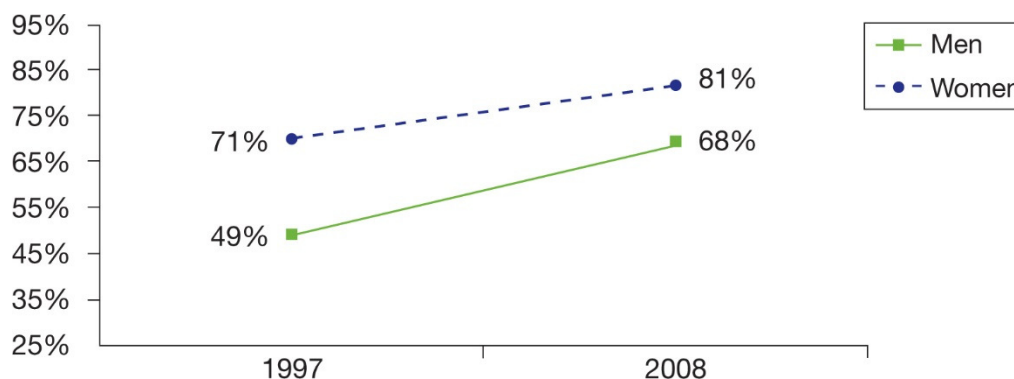
In sum, unlike in 1963, when *American Women* was released, we now know that most men who become fathers want to provide both financially and emotionally for their families, but often struggle with how to reconcile that ideal with outmoded workplace assumptions and expectations. Importantly, we found that fewer men who prioritize both their work and their

family life in roughly equivalent ways experience lower work-life conflict (42%) compared to men who prioritize their work outside the home (62%).¹⁸ In other words, both today's fathers and mothers aspire to the dual-centric provider model and mindset.

The Impact of Changing Roles on Children

While *American Women* did not discuss the mother-child relationship in any detail, ever since mothers started to move into the workforce, a debate has been raging about the effect on children of having working mothers. There are two sides to this debate. One is whether mothers who work outside the home can have as good a relationship with their children as mothers who do not work outside the home. FWI's research shows that men's and women's attitudes about this issue are converging, and that most men and women agree that a mother who works outside the home can have as good a relationship with her children as a mother who does not.¹⁹

Figure 9: Attitudes about employed women's roles as mothers (1977-2008)



SOURCE: Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home (Families and Work Institute 2011)

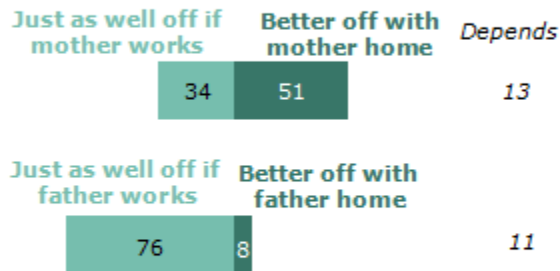
However, when asked the question from the standpoint of children—i.e., whether it is better for *children* to have a mother who works outside the home or not—both men and women are still quite ambivalent.

As the Pew Research Center found in their *Breadwinner Mom* poll, slightly more than half of Americans believe that children would be better off if their mothers stayed home. And, despite the changing aspirations of fathers to be more involved in their children's lives, 92% of Americans don't think children would be better off if fathers stayed home!²⁰

Figure 10: The public differs in role of fathers and mothers

The Public Differs in Role of Fathers and Mothers

% saying children are ...



Note: The questions were asked separately for mothers and fathers. Responses of "Just as well if mother/father works" and "Depends" are not shown.

Source: Pew Research Center survey, conducted April 25-28, 2013, N=1,003.

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Interestingly, the vast majority of this research has asked adults—not the children themselves—how they feel about employed parents. In an effort to address this gap, Ellen Galinsky, president of Families and Work Institute, decided to ask the children, conducting a nationally representative study of children from the third through the twelfth grades. What she found is that children who are being raised by employed mothers—whether in a dual-income household or a single-income household—experience this as *normal*.²¹ In other words, the children don't wish their mothers didn't have jobs.

In the survey, when a girl aged 13 was asked: "What do you want to tell the working parents of America?" she replied, "The father is not the only one who has to work. The mother can work if she wants. She has a right to be independent."

A boy aged 9 echoed this sentiment, saying, "I think that it doesn't matter who works as long as you get the money you need and take care of your family."

Only 2% of the children wrote that they wanted their parents to stay home.

Ask the Children also asked the following "one wish" question: "If you were granted one wish that would change the way that your mother's/your father's work affects your life, what would that wish be?" A nationally representative sample of parents was also asked to guess what their

children would wish. Most parents (56%) guessed that their children would wish for more time with them. Perhaps surprisingly, more time was not at the top of children's wish lists. Only 10% of children made that wish about their mothers, and 15.5% of children made that wish about their fathers. Most children wished that their mothers (34%) and their fathers (27.5%) would be less stressed and tired. By contrast, only 2% of parents guessed that their children would make that wish. A girl aged 18 expressed this well when she said, "Leave your work at work, and put on your parenting suit at home."²²

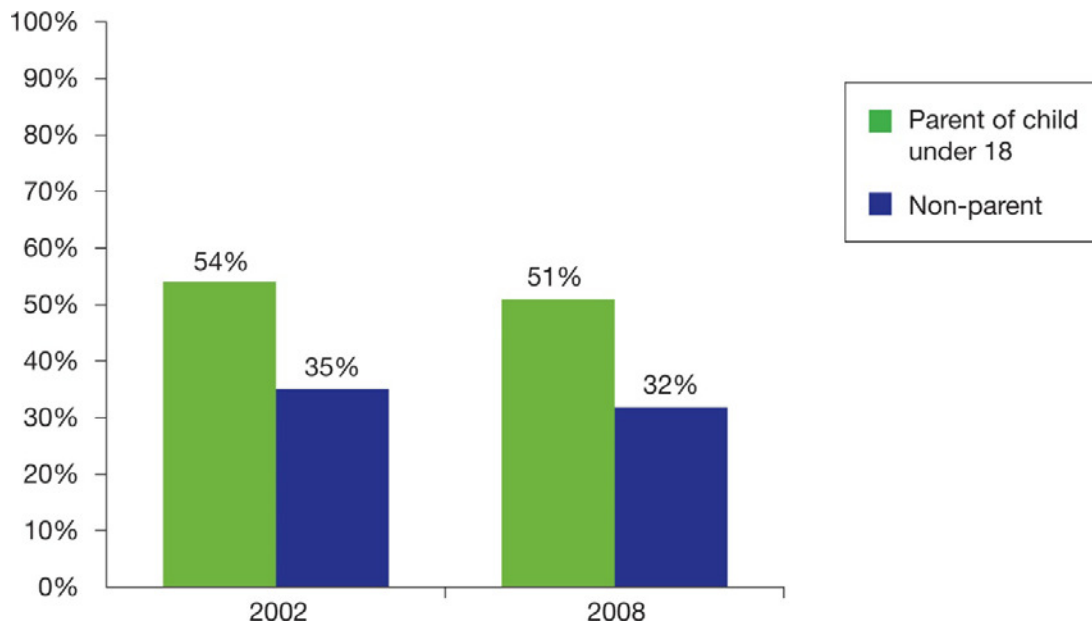
Importantly, the debate over whether it is better for children to have their mothers stay home obscures the fact that the majority of women who are providing financially for their families are single mothers. For them, this debate is irrelevant since they have no choice but to work. However, they are no less committed to being good parents. For them, a main constraint in this quest is the availability and affordability of child care.

The New Dimension of Care: Elder Care

American Women was not only silent regarding how children feel about their parents having jobs outside the home, it was also silent on another dimension of care that will soon eclipse child care in this country: elder care. We learned from the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce that, in 2008, about 17% of employees were providing special care for a relative or in-law over age 65 (men and women alike) and that 42% of employees—nearly 54.6 million employees—had provided special care for a relative or in-law over age 65 during the previous five years. Roughly half of employees (49%) expected to provide special care for a relative or in-law over age 65 within the following five years.²³

While men and women are both likely to be family caregivers, women spend more time providing care than men do. On average, women spend 9.1 hours a week providing care (or an average of 6.4 hours providing in-person care and an average 2.7 hours providing indirect care), while men spend an average of 5.7 hours as caregivers (or an average 3.4 hours providing in-person care and an average 2.2 hours providing indirect care). Interestingly, while men don't spend as much time providing elder care, they report higher levels of work-life conflict than women who are providing elder care. However, men and women who are providing both child care and elder care are significantly more likely to report much higher levels of conflict than those providing elder care alone.²⁴²³

Figure 11: Family elder caregivers with and without child care responsibility who experience some/a lot of work-life conflict



SOURCE: The Elder Care Study: Everyday Realities and Wishes for Change (Families and Work Institute 2010)

ARE CHANGING FAMILIES CHANGING WORK?

The changes happening on the home front are not happening in a vacuum. To a great extent, they affect and reflect changes in the workplace, both in the nature of work and in the way work gets done. Again, discussing all of these changes is outside the scope of this paper, but we want to focus on several key aspects of the changing nature of the workplace that have had a very direct impact on families.

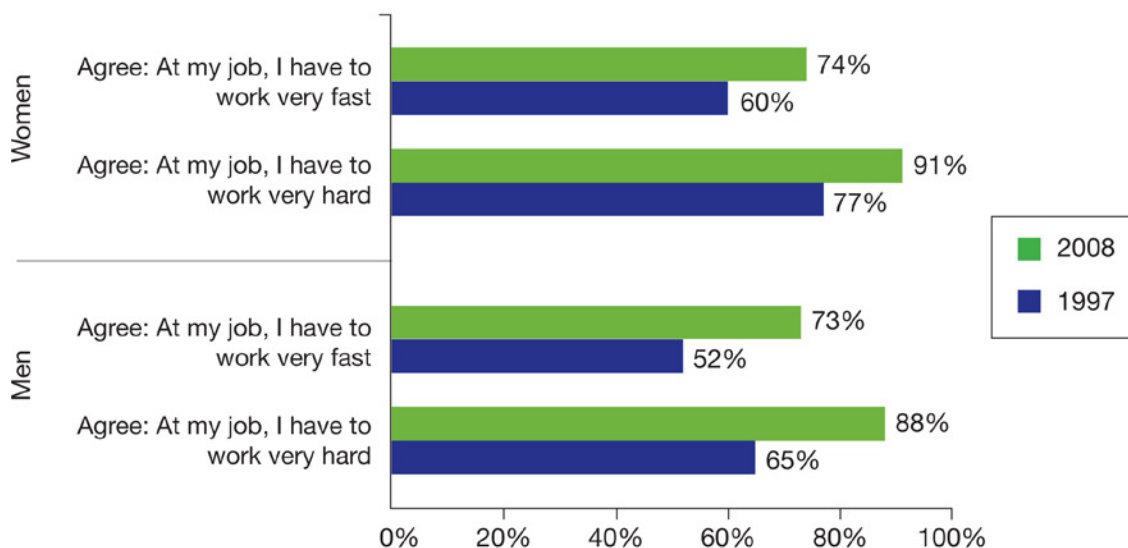
The Changing Nature of Work

For most professional and managerial employees, globalization and technology have created a 24/7 work environment. Many of them work on global teams where calls begin at 6:00 am and go well into the night. The relentless and infinite nature of e-mail—without clear boundaries or clearly articulated expectations regarding responsiveness—creates a work environment where people are constantly being interrupted at work and think they must check e-mail at all hours of the day and night. Add to this the downsizing that has occurred, especially since the

Great Recession beginning in 2007, and the pressure on these white collar employees to “do more with less” and to work more hours is difficult to resist, and data bear this out.

Women worked an average of 39 hours per week in 1977 and 41 hours in 2008 without reducing the number of hours per day they spent on child care. Men worked an average of 47 hours per week in 1977 and 46 hours in 2008 while adding almost two additional hours (1.7) per day of child care. Men and women report having to work longer and faster than ever before.²⁵

Figure 12: Job demands over time



SOURCE: 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (Families and Work Institute 2008)

In a study of white collar fathers in four large companies, over half of the fathers said they felt they had to work more than 50 hours per week, and roughly 45% of the fathers said they were expected to work evenings and weekends to be seen as committed.²⁶

The problems are reversed in the low-income workforce: under-employment rather than over-employment. Low-income employees work fewer hours than high-income employees—41% of low-income employees work part time in their main jobs compared with only 9% of high-income employees. In addition, they are less likely to work regular daytime hours (56% versus 81% of high-income employees) and more likely to work on Saturdays and Sundays (38% versus 18% of high-income employees). Not surprisingly, 44% of the low-income workforce would like to work more paid hours. In contrast, only 6% of the high-income workforce wants more paid hours.²⁷

Why don't low-income employees work more hours? Here low-income men and women differ dramatically. In the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce, men and women were asked why they work fewer hours than they wish. Low-income men were far more likely than low-income women to say they can't find a job that offers more paid hours (46% versus 22%), while low-income women were more likely than low-income men to say that they can't get the flexibility they need to manage work, personal and family responsibilities (21% versus 1%).²⁸

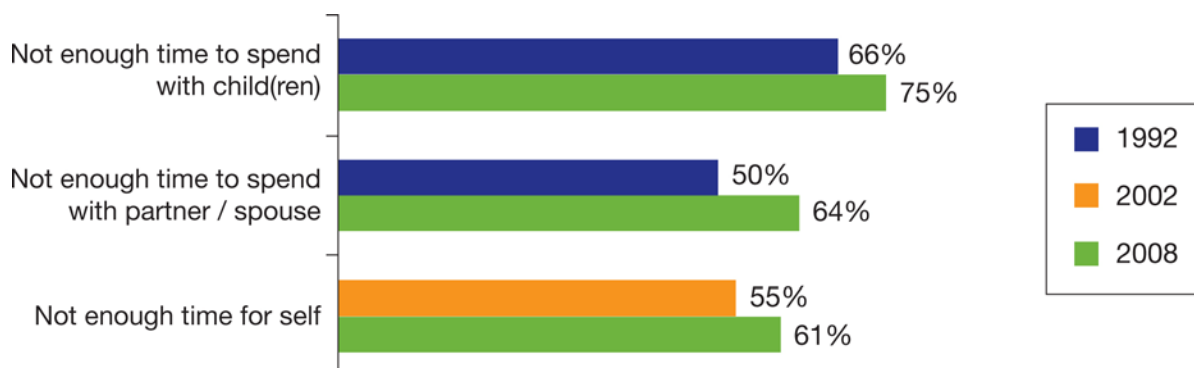
The Response to the Changing Nature of Work

Given the multiple roles that both mothers and fathers play, they are increasingly stressed. In the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce, we asked respondents how often in the last month had they felt:

- nervous and stressed;
- unable to control the important things in your life;
- confident about your ability to handle your personal problems;
- things were going your way; and
- difficulties were piling up so high that you could not overcome them.

In 2008, 43% of employees reported experiencing three or more of these indicators of stress that have negative medical outcomes sometimes, often or very often. In addition, employed mothers and fathers were experiencing a "time famine."²⁹

Figure 13: Employed parents report time famine ³⁰



SOURCE: 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (Families and Work Institute 2008)

Is it, therefore, any surprise that both men and women say that what they really need is more flexibility at work in order to fit their life into their work and their work into their life?

We have determined, based on years of research, that flexibility is as much a matter of the work environment and culture as it is about policies and procedures. Therefore, we have come to define work-life fit as having the following elements:

My supervisor cares about the effect of work on my personal/family life.

My supervisor is responsive when I have personal/family business.

I have the coworker support I need to successfully manage my work and family life.

I have the schedule flexibility I need to successfully manage my work and family life.

My work schedule/shift meets my needs.

In a poll conducted by the Alliance for Work-Life Progress (AWLP) and the consulting firm WFD asking which types of day-to-day schedule flexibility were the most useful, 38% of both men and women say they need flexible time—in other words, more control over when they come into the office and when they leave—and 28% of men and 30% of women say they also need time off on short notice—to deal with the unexpected, like the phone call from school saying your child broke her arm and has to be picked up immediately.³¹ The good news is that, since 2005, more employers are offering options that allow employees to better manage the daily times and places in which they work. These options include flex time (from 66% to 77%); flex place (from 34% to 63%); choices in managing time (from 78% to 93%); and daily time off when important needs arise (from 77% to 87%).³²

The bad news is that, in that time, employers have reduced their provision of options that involve employees spending significant amounts of time away from full-time work. These include moving from part-time to full-time schedules and back again (from 54% to 41%) and flex career options such as career breaks for personal or family responsibilities (from 73% to 52%). While Families and Work Institute data indicate that a culture of flexibility (where flexibility is supported without stigma or jeopardy) is one of the most important predictors of employee well-being,³³ the sense that employees will be stigmatized has remained unchanged since FWI began collecting data on this issue, with approximately two out of five employees agreeing that employees who use flexibility are less likely to get ahead on the job.³⁴

Sociologist Pamela Stone of Hunter College of the City University of New York conducted a qualitative study of highly educated women professionals who worked less than full-time to understand the dynamic behind this stigma. She found that the issue was negative perceptions of those who use these options that undermine their confidence and, ultimately, their ambition.

They describe their experience in these ways:³⁵

I didn't have the guts to say "I'm working part-time." ... I'd leave at 5 o'clock [typically the end of a full-time workday] and everybody would say, "Oh, Blair's leaving." ... [Working part-time is] something like a cold. It'll pass or you leave.

– an attorney at a large law firm who left the workforce

Part-time status made me lowest. It was just a big psychological deal to cut the cord. Because I never envisioned, as I said, myself not working. But I wasn't getting any satisfaction from working. And I didn't envision myself not working, and I just felt like I would become a nobody if I quit. Well, I was sort of a nobody working, too. So, it was sort of: Which nobody do you want to be?

– a marketing executive who left the workforce

In fact, some women reported starting to feel undervalued as soon as they got pregnant, in part because of the assumption that they either want to or should stay home once they become mothers:

Ironically, when I was pregnant there started to be—and I don't know if it was just coincidental, I'm not sure what it was—but all of a sudden there was sort of this disenchantment with me, that all of a sudden I wasn't traveling as much ... And, clearly, the expectation—I mean, I started to hear through the rumor mill that they weren't counting on me coming back. According to a friend of mine who was very connected, and she said to me, "You know, the management really doesn't want to see you back."

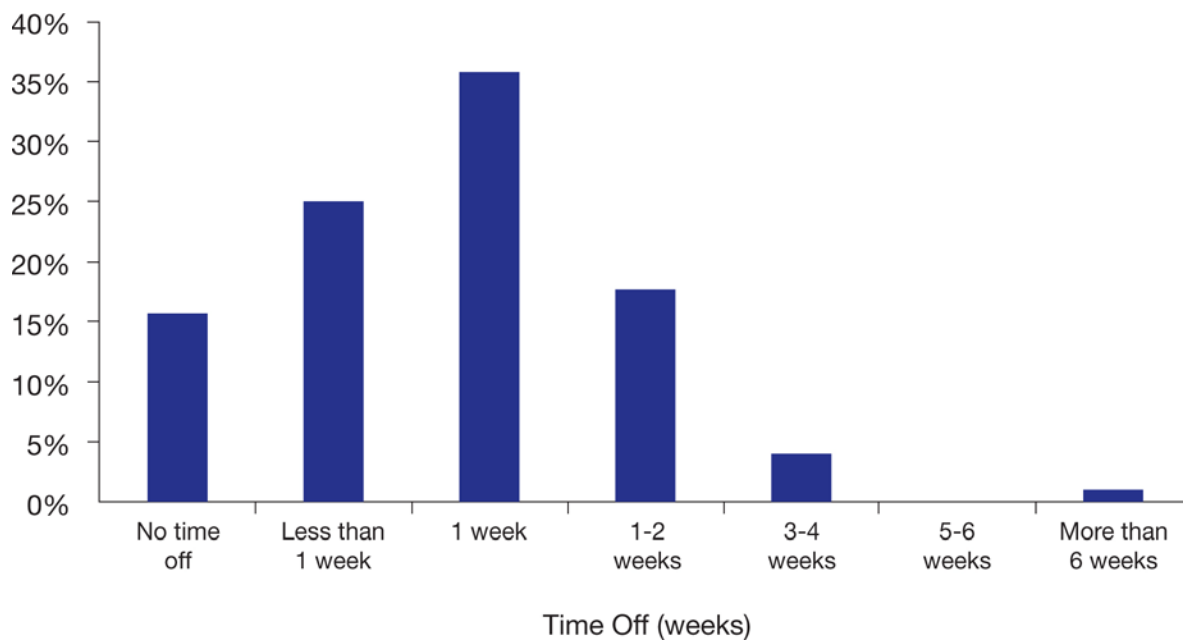
These outmoded assumptions are the basis of what has been called maternal bias. As Professor Stephanie Coontz of The Evergreen State College wrote in *Progress at Work, but Mothers Still Pay the Price*, an op-ed in *The New York Times* on June 9, 2013, "Motherhood ... is now a greater predictor of wage inequality than gender in the United States." Stanford

University professor Shelley Correll has documented that the resumes of mothers received half as many callbacks as the resumes of those who purported to be childless, even though they were identical in every other respect.³⁶

Fathers face what is, in many ways, the opposite assumptions to those women face. In general, the assumption at work is that becoming a father increases men's commitment to work—in part because everyone presumes that the father is going to be the primary breadwinner. Add to this that fathers are even less likely to feel permission to take parental leave or ask for formal flexibility, and the result is greater stigma on those men who do.

Paternity leave is a strong indicator of the perception that men have of how supportive their workplace is to fathers who want to take a significant role at home, and, by this indication, most new fathers feel they have to downplay their status as fathers. For example, despite the fact that close to 75% of white collar fathers want to be significantly involved in their children's lives, they start off taking almost no time off when their children are born, as indicated by Figure 14 below.³⁷ If men who are in professional and managerial positions who can afford to take paternity leave are not doing so, it is reasonable to conclude that men in middle class and blue collar jobs are even less likely to take any time off.

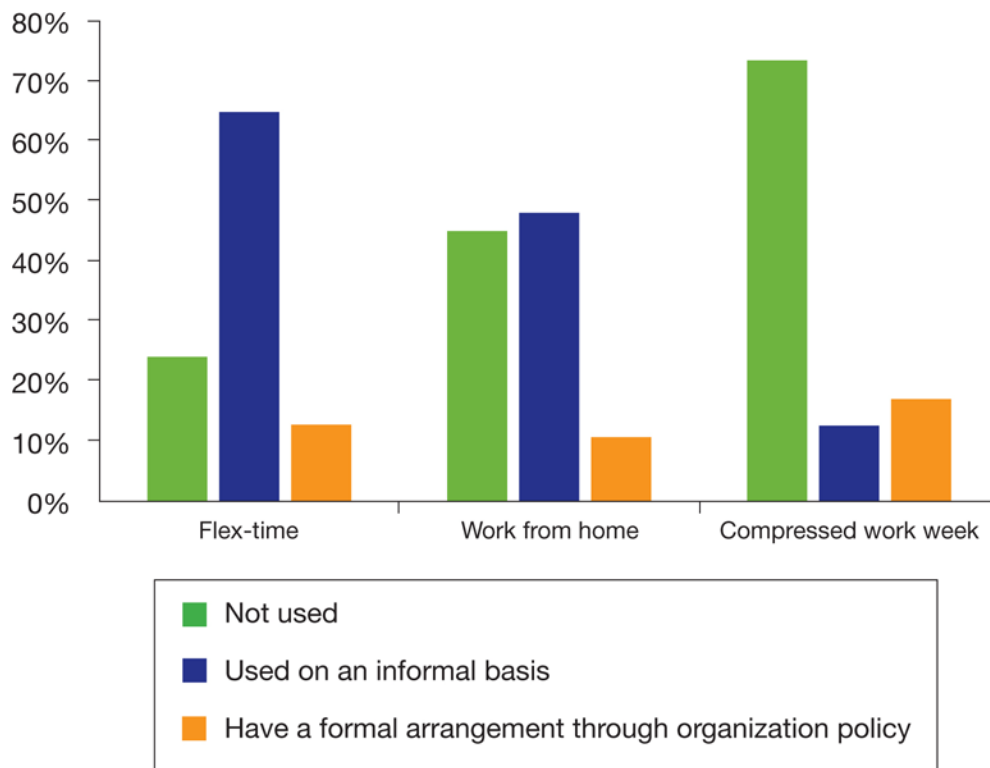
Figure 14: Fathers' time off after most recent birth/adoption (2011)



SOURCE: The New Dad: A Work (and Life) in Progress (Boston College 2013)

Similarly, while mothers and fathers both want greater flexibility, fathers are less likely to use what is offered through formal arrangements, relying instead on informal use of flexibility, as evidenced by the figure below.

Figure 15: Fathers' flexible work arrangement usage (2011)



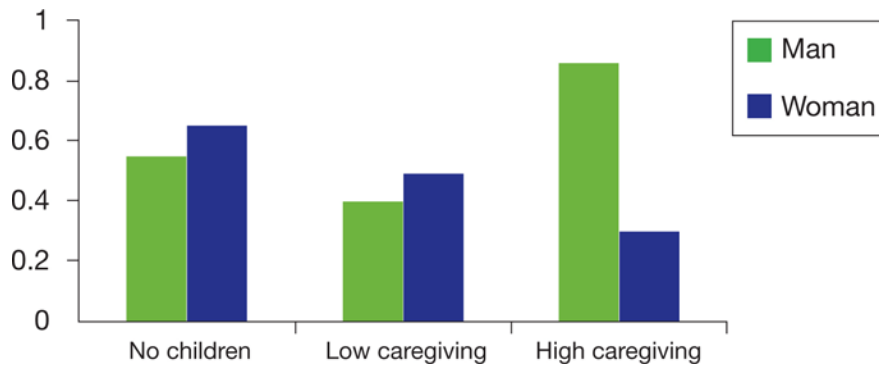
SOURCE: The New Dad: A Work (and Life) in Progress (Boston College 2013)

Part of the reluctance of men to be explicit about their work-life needs is the stigma that they see directed at men who are. Jennifer Berdahl of the University of Toronto has studied the flexibility stigma that men experience and uses the term “not man enough harassment” to describe a work environment where men experienced one or more of the following³⁸ in the past two years:

- 1) Made you feel like you were not tough enough, e.g., assertive, strong or ambitious enough for the job
- 2) Made you feel you needed to act more tough and aggressive to be respected
- 3) Made it necessary for you to sacrifice family or personal time to be respected at work
- 4) Made fun of you for being soft-spoken or shy

In a study of 232 unionized employees across several small- to medium-sized workplaces, she found that men who had significant caregiving responsibilities—what Berdahl terms “high caregiving”—experienced a high level of “not man enough harassment.”³⁹

Figure 16: Not man enough harassment by level of caregiving

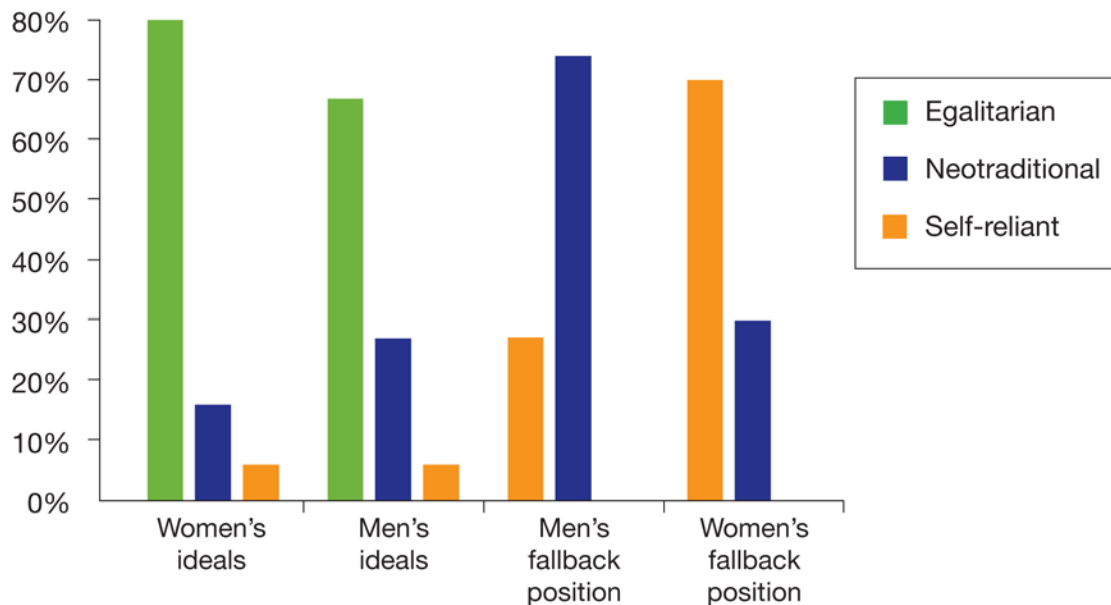


SOURCE: The Flexibility Stigma for Men (Berdahl et al. 2013)

Unfortunately, this and other research attest to an undeniable truth: the changing nature of family life—including the changing aspirations and needs of both mothers and fathers—has not created a culture at work that reflects these emerging values and desires.

The younger generation is rightfully concerned about the fact that workplace culture does not support new family structures and values. In a study of millennials’ aspirations for their lives, Kathleen Gerson of New York University found that the majority of millennial women and men in her study have the same family ideal: an egalitarian relationship at home that allows them to have both significant careers and meaningful, fulfilling roles at home. However, when asked what they would do if they couldn’t make that work, men’s and women’s responses were diametrically opposed, as evidenced in Figure 17 below. The majority of young men said they would resort to a “neotraditional” relationship, where their wife/partner would be primarily responsible for the home front, even if she works. The majority of young women, in contrast, said they would resort to being self-reliant, which, for many, meant not getting married and having a family.⁴⁰

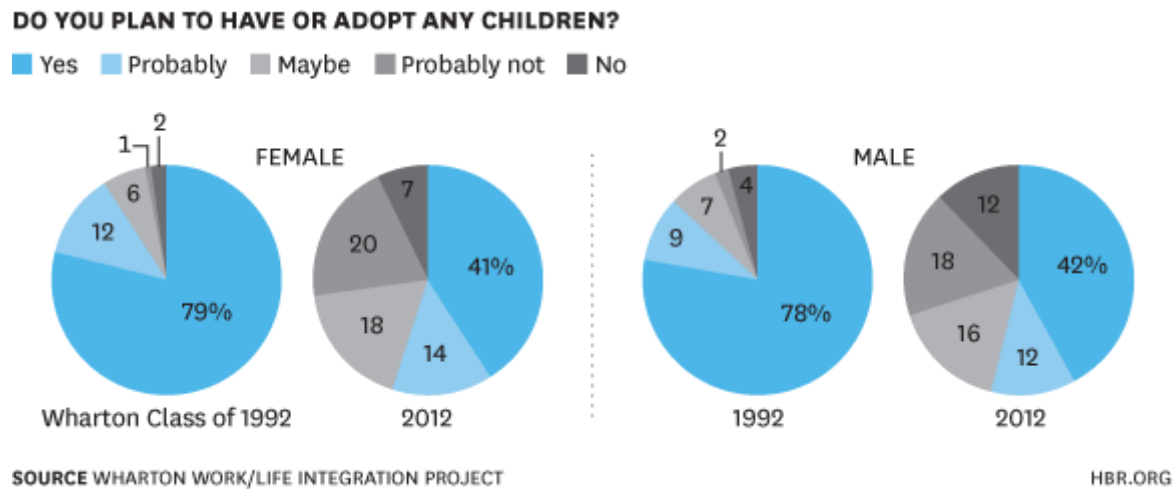
Figure 17: Millennials' ideal family structure and fallback positions



SOURCE: The Unfinished Revolution: How a New Generation Is Reshaping Family, Work and Gender in America (Kathleen Gerson 2010)

Stew Friedman of the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School has similarly found that young people are struggling to shape a vision for their future based on what they perceive as the reality of work and family life. In his 2012 book *Baby Bust*, Friedman documents that male and female students at Wharton have embraced the changing gender roles at home we describe in the beginning of this paper. They also value the role of—and, in an ideal world, would want to become—parents. However, while 79% of female students and 78% of male students in 1992 said they planned to have children, only 41% and 42%, respectively, say so today. One of the main reasons for this precipitous drop is that the Wharton students today anticipate having to work 72 hours per week, while the students in 1992 anticipated having to work 56 hours per week. Another big driver is the amount of debt students are graduating with today, which, when combined with the cost of raising children, makes the financial ability to do both out of reach, even for this group of elite students.⁴¹

Figure 18: Percent of college students saying in 1992 and 2012 that they plan on having or adopting children ⁴²

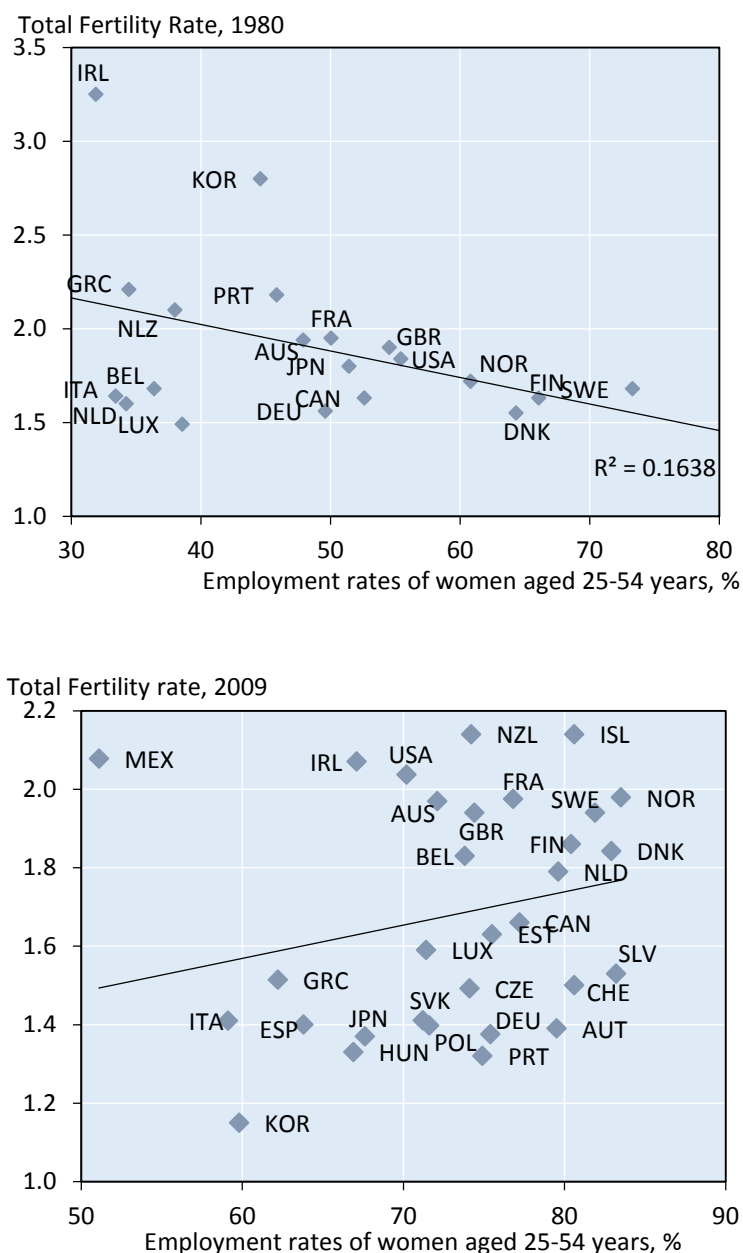


WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR THE COUNTRY

While it is tempting to conclude that the private sector has a long way to go and leave it at that, there are profound implications for the future of the country from this stubborn lag between changes in family life and changes in workplace culture. In fact, we contend that the future of our country depends on all of us closing this lag. Why? Because demographics are destiny.

Until about 2000, fertility rates around the world declined as more women worked outside the home. But, since then, that correlation has flipped, and fertility rates are now *higher* in those countries where women's labor force participation is also higher.⁴³

Figure 19: Correlation between fertility rates and women's labor force participation (1980 and 2009)



Source: OECD Family Database 2012

As the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has said:

The reasons underlying [declining birth rates] are not fully known although factors such as financial insecurity and concern about managing work and family life clearly play a

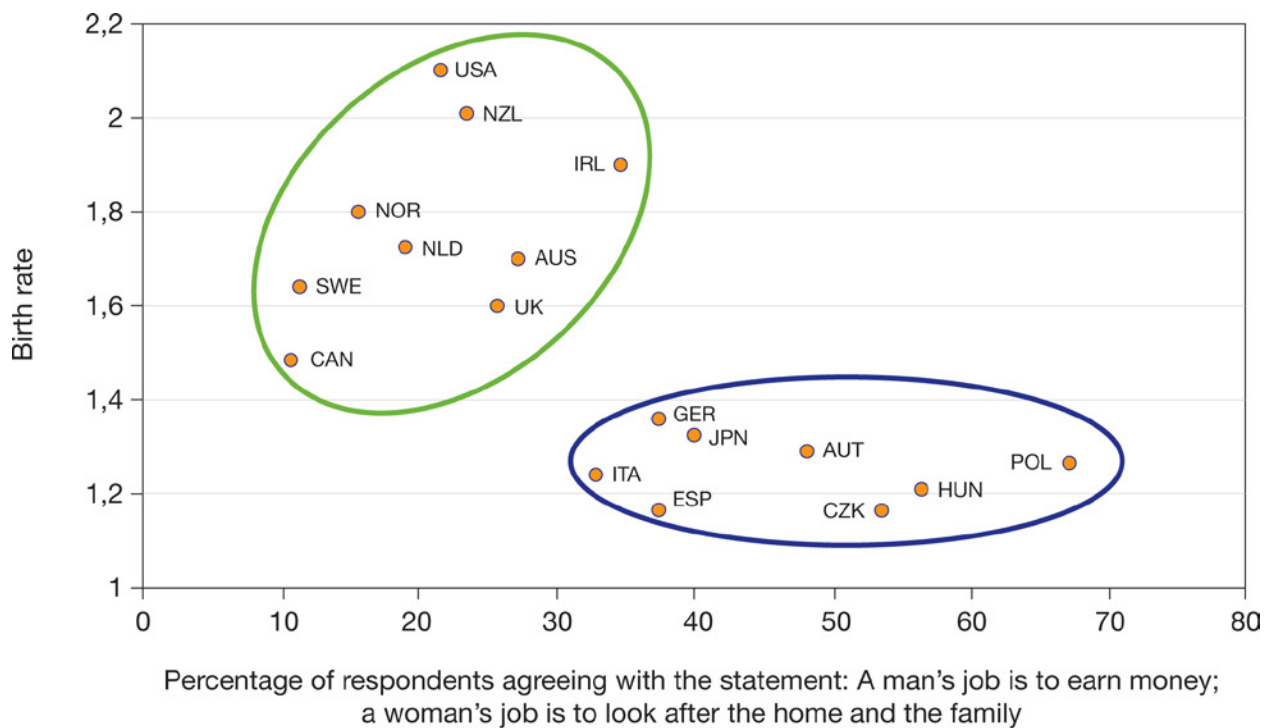
part ... as well as a greater perception of “incompatibility” between professional and family roles that still characterizes many OECD countries.⁴⁴

A 2007 Goldman Sachs report, *Gender Inequality, Growth and Global Aging*, similarly reported that:

... women in many countries have a choice of either working or having children. Faced with such a choice, fertility and employment rates both suffer. By contrast, in the countries where it is relatively easy to work and have children, female employment and fertility both tend to be higher.⁴⁵

While the Goldman Sachs report focused on what public policies support working mothers, there is another dimension to the positive correlation between fertility rates and women’s employment: cultural norms. The importance of cultural norms can be clearly seen in Figure 20 below, part of a presentation by Johannes Jütting and Denis Drechsler of the OECD Development Centre to the Norway Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2007.⁴⁶

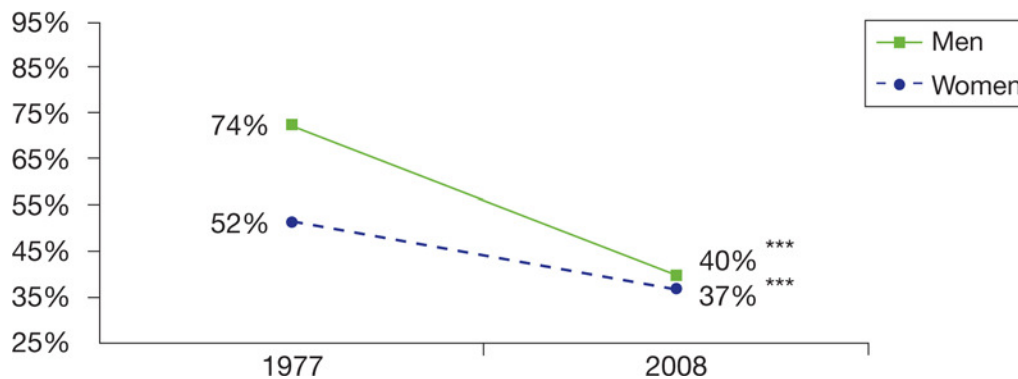
Figure 20: Attitude trap: birth rate and gender equality



Sources: Mortvik and Spant, based on UN and ISSP data

We have asked a similar question in our National Study of the Changing Workforce and have found that, by 2008, men and women were equally likely to reject traditional gender roles.

Figure 21: Male-female attitudes about gender roles (1977-2008)



SOURCE: Times Are Changing: Gender and Generation at Work and at Home (Families and Work Institute 2011)

The interplay between social policy and cultural norms regarding gender roles at home is complex and can have unintended consequences. In an in-depth report on gender and work patterns, *Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now*, the OECD found that:

*Government policies which help to reconcile work and family life ... often play a key role in female labour force participation. Although such policies aim to support both parents, they frequently and inadvertently reinforce the more traditional role of women as caregivers, so perpetuating gender inequality. The reason is that mothers generally make much wider use than fathers of parental leave options, part-time employment opportunities, and other flexible working time arrangements like teleworking. It is primarily mothers, for example, who avail themselves of long parental leave—and they are frequently reluctant to give up leave to their partner's benefit (OECD, 2011c). The result is a reinforcement of traditional gender roles. In fact, even when policies allow or encourage women to change the nature of their participation in employment or their hours of work, inequalities at home and in contributions to home life have a tendency to remain. A vicious circle is thus established: as long as mothers reduce employment participation when they have (young) children in the household, employers have an incentive to invest less in their female than in their male workers.*⁴⁷

The key, it appears, is to design policies and shape cultural norms in the workplace and in public policy that promote the ability for both women *and* men to be a “dual-centric provider,” as we describe in this paper.

Given the importance of changing the conditions under which men make their decisions, the OECD report:

... suggests that such policies are likely to be most effective if they intervene at those critical times when men are more open to changing their behaviour—when they become fathers, for example. Men are more likely to bond with their children if they spend time caring for them from an early age. Fathers’ greater involvement in childcare has beneficial effects on their children’s cognitive and behavioural development (Baxter and Smart, 2011; Huerta et al., 2011) and can reduce the time mothers devote to childcare.⁴⁸

The bottom line: when **public policy, workplace practices** and **cultural norms** support employed parents, men and women will contribute to the economy both by working and by raising the next generation of workers. This is important for economic growth, a sustainable retirement system and strong and secure families.

Let’s take economic growth first. According to McKinsey research, the U.S. GDP would be 25% smaller if women hadn’t started entering the workforce in large numbers in the late 1970s.⁴⁹ The World Economic Forum has calculated that if women worked at the same rates as men, it would boost U.S. GDP by as much as 9%, Eurozone GDP by 13% and Japanese GDP by 16%.⁵⁰ This is because when women work for a paycheck, they spend that money. In fact, women are the biggest emerging market in the world today.

Now, let’s turn to retirement. Japan has one of the lowest fertility rates in the world, and the government estimates that by 2060, its population will have dwindled from a peak of 187 million in 2007 to 87 million, half of whom will be over the age of 65.⁵¹ Various European countries are also worried about supporting an aging population given low birth rates, and the United States is starting to face this same demographic problem.⁵² Although our country has had relatively high birth rates (in part fueled by immigration) and rates of employed women for the last decade, both have stalled in recent years. In the meantime, an estimated 10,000 Baby Boomers retire every day.⁵³ The aging workforce has been called a “silver tsunami.”⁵⁴ We need more men and women to work and have families to avert long-term disaster. Public policy and workplace

practices need to recognize that employed parents contribute to the long-term viability of our retirement system and to provide support to allow them to work and have families.

But, even if none of these economic benefits were true, we would argue that it is still the case that the “ideal” worker from a public point of view is an employed parent because, as we have shown, most American employees already have jobs and are caring for a family member. In our experience, a workplace that is responsive to the needs of employed parents is also one that is responsive to employees with other caregiving responsibilities, including elder care. Our research shows that flexible work environments are just as, if not more, productive, and have lower health care and other costs than rigid workplaces.⁵⁵ But, perhaps even more importantly, our research also shows that families are stronger when parents feel they can provide for the family both financially *and* emotionally—in other words, when both parents are striving to be a dual-centric provider.

CONCLUSION

On the 50th anniversary of the publication of the *American Women: The Report of the President's Commission on the Status of Women*, it is laughable to assume a *Leave It To Beaver* world at home or at work, but there is still a pernicious lag in policy and practice in terms of addressing these realities.

If we, however, could use this anniversary as a rallying point to agree that the dual-centric provider is the new normal, and if we work toward federal policies, workplace practices and shifts in cultural norms to support the dual-centric provider, it would go a long way in ensuring a future that is better for individuals and institutions alike, as well as for the country as a whole.

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<http://www.census.gov/prod/2013pubs/p20-570.pdf>
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The data in *Times Are Changing* is primarily based on the *2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce (NSCW)*, with comparisons to the 1992, 1997 and 2002 NSCW, and the 1977 Quality of Employment Survey of the U.S. Department of Labor, which serves as the baseline for the NSCW. The data collection methods used in the 2008 NSCW are described at the end of *Times Are Changing*.
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- ⁸ Ibid.
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- ¹⁰ Ibid.
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Harrington, B. et al (2013). *The New Dad: A Work (and Life) in Progress*. Boston, MA: Boston College Center for Work and Family. Hereinafter, *The New Dad*.
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- ¹⁴ *Times Are Changing*.
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- ²⁸ *2008 NSCW*.
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